

## Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 NEA-06 ISO-00 SAM-01 SS-15 INR-05 NSC-05

CIAE-00 DRC-01 RSC-01 /053 W  
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R 190700Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 261  
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON  
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 6590

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, SP

SUBJ: STATUS OF FRANCO'S HEALTH

1. ALL INDICATIONS, INCLUDING OBSERVATION OF FRANCO HIMSELF AND COMMENTS OF CLOSE ASSOCIATES, ARE THAT CAUDILLO'S RECOVERY FROM JULY HEALTH CRISIS CONTINUES AND THAT HIS CURRENT CONDITION MUST BE CHARACTERIZED AS REASONABLY GOOD FOR AN 82-YEAR OLD MAN.

2. MARQUES DE MONDEJAR, HEAD OF PRINCE'S ROYAL HOUSEHOLD, TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT CAUDILLO'S APPEARANCE AND CONDITION HAD IMPROVED GREATLY BECAUSE OF DOCTORS' DECISION TO WITHDRAW HIM FROM TRANQUILIZERS. TRANQUILIZERS, WHICH FRANCO HAD RECEIVED FOR SOME MONTHS TO HELP HIM CONTROL TREMBLING HANDS AND ARMS DURING PUBLIC ACTS, HAD MADE HIS MOVEMENTS AND APPEARANCE LISTLESS. WITH MEDICATION, MONDEJAR CONTINUED, FRANCO'S MIND IS CLEARER AND EYES AND GENERAL EXPRESSION MORE ALERT. CAUDILLO'S NEPHEW, NICOLAS FRANCO, TOLD AMBASSADOR AND SUBSEQUENTLY POLITICAL COUNSELOR THAT FRANCO'S HEALTH IS NOW "QUITE GOOD" AND THAT MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IS THAT HIS MIND IS CLEAR AND KEEN. THIS IS ALSO OPINION OF NEW BRITISH AMBASSADOR WHO PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS YESTERDAY.

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SOME USUALLY WELL-INFORMED EMBASSY SOURCES, HOWEVER, CLAIM FRANCO

NOW TROUBLED MORE BY PERIODS OF MENTAL OPACITY. AIDE TO PRIME MINISTER ARIAS TOLD EMBOFF THAT WHILE ARIAS HIMSELF USUALLY GIVES STAFF OPTIMISTIC REPORTS ON FRANCO'S CONDITION AFTER VISITS WITH HIM, HIS REMARKS HAVE AT TIME IMPLIED THAT SOME DAYS BETTER THAN OTHERS FOR FRANCO'S MENTAL ALERTNESS.

3. FRANCO'S PUBLIC BEHAVIOR GENERALLY TENDS TO CONFIRM MORE OPTIMISTIC READINGS ON HIS CONDITION. AMBASSADOR AND OTHER AMERICAN OFFICIALS WHO HAVE SEEN FRANCO AT OCTOBER 1 RECEPTION OR AT SUBSEQUENT AUDIENCES HAVE NOTED THAT WHILE ADVANCED AGE AND SOME FEEBLENESS PHYSICALLY APPARENT, HIS MIND SEEMS CLEAR AND HIS EXPRESSION IS BRIGHT AND ALERT. SIMILARLY, NO SERIOUS SPEECH DEFECTS ARE NOTICEABLE OTHER THAN FAINTNESS OF VOICE THAT HAS PLAGUED HIM FOR SEVERAL YEARS. PERSONAL OBSERVATION AND PHOTOS INDICATE FRANCO HAS CONTINUED TO GAIN WEIGHT SINCE LEAVING HOSPITAL IN EMACIATED CONDITION IN AUGUST.

4. FRANCO HAS NOW RESUMED IN GREAT PART, BUTNOT ENTIRELY, REGULAR CEREMONIAL RESPONSIBILITIES HE DISCHARGED BEFORE MEDICAL CRISIS IN JULY. HE IS NOT CONDUCTING TWICE WEEKLY AUDIENCES FOR CIVILIAN AND MILITARY LEADERS AND PRESIDING REGULARLY OVER COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETINGS AND AT PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS BY NEW ENVOYS. BUT WHILE PRECISE COMPARISONS DIFFICULT TO MAKE, OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT HE HAS CURTAILED SOMEWHAT FORMER SCHEDULE OF RIBBON-CUTTINGS AND OTHER SUCH ACTS. DECISION TO POSTPONE PROPOSED VISIT OF NICARAGUAN CHIEF OF STATE SOMOZA ALLEGEDLY BECAUSE OF FRANCO'S HEALTH SUGGEST THERE MAY BE SOME CONCERN ON PART OF FRANCO AND HIS MEDICAL ADVISORS OVER POSSIBILITY OF AVERTAXING CAUDILLO WITH CEREMONIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

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